

BROOKLYN ASKS FOR UNION

YESTERDAY'S HEARING - ON THE GREATER NEW-YORK BILL.

CITIZENS OF THE CITY OF CHURCHES SPEAK IN FAVOR OF THE MEASURE - COGENT REASONS FOR THE PROPOSED CONSOLIDATION - NO ACTION TAKEN BY THE COMMITTEES.

ALBANY, N. Y., March 8.—The Senate Chamber was packed this afternoon with 400 enthusiastic Brooklynites favoring the Aspinall (Rep., Kings,) bill for the consolidation of the City of Brooklyn and the surrounding towns with New-York. A special train brought them here. Seats for the throng had been arranged in the well and in front of and behind the Senatorial circles, while the galleries, which had been especially opened, absorbed a large portion of the overflow.

The Cities Committee of the Senate, under the lead of Senator McCarty of Kings, who acted as Chairman in the absence of Col. W. L. Brown, and of the Assembly, under its Chairman, Col. Webster of New-York, occupied seats around the stenographers' table, which was covered with maps and lithographs. Scattered in the throng were Almet F. Jenks, representing Mayor Boody; the venerable Andrew H. Green and Frederick W. Devoe of New-York, two of the Commissioners selected to examine into the possibility of extending New-York's acreage and swelling her population. Among those from Brooklyn were these gentlemen, all decorated with badges declaring the object of their visit: Louis Liebman, Eugene G. Blackford, James Matthews, Eugene D. Berri, H. B. Scarman, S. A. Forman, A. D. Fiske, Charles A. Frost, T. B. Barnes, J. O. Carpenter, John A. Bliss, William W. Baird, D. M. Sommers, D. Baird, Francis Hopkins, Rufus T. Riggs, C. A. Martin, E. H. Bishop, Judge Manley, Oliver Johnson, Davis Liebman, John Ward, W. A. Cummings, J. D. Schilling, H. T. McLeod, W. H. Davis, George W. Bacon, S. C. Kendall, Joseph O'Brien, and James McMahon.

Andrew H. Green said that the consolidation project was the most important now before the people of the State. He gave an account of the efforts to effect consolidation which had been made since 1873, when the Bronx River was made the east boundary of New-York City, and explained the bill, which is the outcome of the deliberations of the commission of 1890. In considering the bill the Legislature would do well to remember, said Mr. Green, that he who hangs upon the wheels of progress is likely to be crushed beneath their revolutions.

James Matthews of Brooklyn said that the greater New-York Committee comprised 700 citizens, mainly Democrats. They asked the right to express themselves at the ballot box.

William J. Gaynor said that his delegation represented a large majority of the people of Brooklyn, and that the idea that the larger part of the people of the City of Churches were opposed to consolidation with New-York was a delusion. Mr. Gaynor said that what Brooklyn's voters had lacked was opportunity, not intelligence or loyalty to what was right. They no longer proposed to trust their public affairs to persons who would run them in their own private interests.

The Consolidation bill was, the speaker continued, only advisory, and its advocates would not commit themselves as favoring the joining of the two cities, but merely as being willing to allow the people to announce their wishes in the matter. He then recited in detail the arguments founded on the figures of the tax bills of the two cities, and showed how the taxes of Brooklyn were more than double those of New-York. The interest of rentpayers in the proposed consolidation and the cause of the excessive taxes and rentals in Brooklyn were taken up in order.

Insurance and loans were in some cases refused and in others made on such exorbitant terms as to be well-nigh out of reach on account of Brooklyn's financial condition and excessive valuation, Mr. Gaynor added. From the figures he produced it was shown that a New-York debt of \$200,000,000 would be equalled by a Brooklyn debt of only \$25,000,000. Brooklyn was within \$1,000,000 of the indebtedness the law allows her to incur. Mr. Gaynor continued:

"At the risk of the adverse criticism of every one in Brooklyn who does not think or only thinks a little, and of every one blinded by the propensity to what I shall not call local patriotism, but puffery, I now desire to say squarely that the assessable property of Brooklyn cannot support a Government adequate to the area and population of Brooklyn without being ruinously taxed. It is well known that Brooklyn is behind in its public works, especially in street improvements and sewers, and that in the number of schools and teachers, policemen, police stations, firemen, engine houses, engines, and the like, it is lamentably deficient. Brooklyn is at least one-third short in her chief agencies of Government. To bring these requirements up to the standard would raise the tax rate much over 3 per cent, while the rentpayers and taxpayers of Brooklyn cannot and will not continue to suffer present taxation, much less an increase.

"Brooklyn standing alone must always remain comparatively poor. New-York even owns the water front of Brooklyn up to low-water mark. Every ship afloat around Brooklyn is within the City of New-York. Many people seem never to have inquired or even thought why it is that New-York City owns the ferry rights on the Brooklyn side as well as on the New-York side, and receives all of the rents and revenues therefrom. I learn that one of the statesmen who represent the City of Brooklyn in the Legislature proposes to introduce and pass a bill giving to Brooklyn its surrounding water front as an offset to the consolidation movement. I would like to hear him explain how he proposes to take the property of the corporation of New-York City away from it without paying for it, as the Constitution requires. I would like also to have him tell us where and how the City of Brooklyn is going to get the money to pay for it, inasmuch as Brooklyn is already within \$1,000,000 of the limit of her indebtedness."

Mr. Gaynor reviewed the unity of the material and moral interests of the two cities, and contrasted public sentiment in the two places. In New-York, he said, the politicians who abused the public's confidence were promptly and severely dealt with. In Brooklyn the political leaders did as they pleased.

In closing, he spoke of the advantages and saving in expense of a joint Government, and told how Brooklyn would be lifted up by consolidation.

Edward C. Graves of the Citizens' Committee said that the issue his committee presented was supported by both Democrats and Republicans and was entirely non-partisan. Opposition, Mr. Graves said, was, of course, inevitable. "This opposition is, to a large extent, voiced and represented by certain Brooklyn afternoon newspapers, every one of which is subsidized to oppose consolidation. These newspapers are drawing from \$20,000 to \$50,000 a year each from the present City of Brooklyn for the publication of legal advertisements found in their columns, which money they are afraid of losing by consolidation when there is no City of Brooklyn." Mr. Graves explained that all that was asked for was an opportunity to obtain an expression of public opinion. There was a precedent, he said, in the case of the annexation of Williamsburg, in 1853, and the same newspapers and same class of people who now oppose consolidation and oppose submitting it to a popular vote were then clamorously in favor of the very things they are now denouncing.

Senator McCarren denied that per capita taxation in Brooklyn was greater than in New-York. The consolidation plan, he said, had not attracted much attention. It originated among sentimentalists who wish to create a city to rival London, and these had been joined by land boomers and persons who supported the idea because it was new. Brooklyn had increased in population faster than New-York. From 1883 to 1892 the average per capita tax in New-York had been 21.33; in Brooklyn it had been 11.62. For the same period the school tax had been \$2.76 per capita in New-York and \$1.97 for Brooklyn; the cost of supporting the police force, \$2.75 in New-York and \$1.52 in Brooklyn; the Fire Department, \$1.26 in New-York and 84 cents in Brooklyn; the Judiciary in New-York \$1.02, and in Brooklyn 13 cents; interest on municipal debts, \$1.47 in New-York and \$1.85 in Brooklyn.

These contrasts showed the greater cost of government in New-York. Had the two cities been consolidated the per capita tax in the united city for the past ten years would have been \$16.60 instead of between \$6 and \$7 which had been paid in Brooklyn. Consolidation would raise rents and create fictitious land values. Mere annexation would not change Brooklyn at all. Her conditions would remain the same so far as raising revenue was concerned. The tax rate of New-York would increase in the future while her resources diminish, but the opposite would be true of Brooklyn. It would not be to Brooklyn's advantage to help New-York to pay for local improvements which could not benefit her. Immense municipalities do not conserve the interests of the people. It was more difficult to dislodge a Government in a city of 3,000,000 than in a city of 1,000,000. He was opposed to submitting the question of annexation to the people, because he did not think they cared to vote on it. He failed to see, and Mr. Gaynor had not explained how, any benefit to Brooklyn would result from consolidation.

J. Seaver Page of New-York said that the speeches which had been made would be timely when the question was submitted to the people of Brooklyn and New-York. All that the bill asked was that the people might be allowed to

decide the question. He acknowledged that he was a sentimentalist. He wished to see in fact the grand city which practically existed already. Mr. Page's enthusiastic pictures of the Greater New-York aroused much applause.

Corporation Counsel Jenks, speaking for Mayor Boody of Brooklyn, said that he had been instructed to say that the Mayor was in favor of a suitable bill submitting the question to the people. He suggested that the bill be amended so as to provide that the Consolidation bill to be drawn by the committee after the election shall include only those cities and towns which have voted in favor of consolidation.

Andrew H. Green opposed Gen. Jenks's proposition.

Senator Aspinall ridiculed the Mayor's offer. The bill had been here two months, he said, and not a single Brooklyn newspaper or city official had spoken a good word for it. Now, when public sentiment was daily swelling for it, the Mayor sends his principal law officer here, to do what? To accomplish the defeat of the bill in a covert way. The Mayor was like the character in Shakespeare: "He protests too much." "In conclusion," said Mr. Aspinall, "I want to say right here that I reject the Mayor's amendment. This bill must be passed by the Senate or killed just as it is—just as it was introduced; I will make no amendment to it."

Senator McCarren characterized the measure as ridiculous without the amendment, and asked what would be the use of the vote of the people if a consolidation bill was to be introduced.

Mr. W. J. Gaynor said a few words in conclusion. He stigmatized the Mayor's proposition as absurd. "We reject it," he said. "This is final."

The hearing then ended. Neither committee reached a decision, nor was any test taken as to the choice of the members. Each committee will meet formally next week. Senator McCarty suggested to the Kings County men that the bill be amended in such a shape that the majority of all the votes cast in Kings County, including the City of Brooklyn and the outlying towns, decide the question, but this proposition was rejected. "We will take this bill as it is or we will have none," said Mr. Aspinall. "The most careful work has been used in its preparation."

"The Aspinall bill or nothing," uttered Counsellor Gaynor, as he strode from the Senate Chamber.